Expanding MSU Press to Publish Former Memphian's Book on Hofheinz

Memphis State University Press today announces plans to publish a book which University president Billy M. Jones believes will gain national prominence and distribution for the Press.

The book is *The Grand Huckster: Houston's Judge Roy Hofheinz, Genius of the Astrodome.* The author is Ed Ray, retired associate editor of *The Press-Scimitar* and former managing editor of the now defunct *Houston Press.* A resident of New Smyrna Beach, Fla., since his retirement in August of 1977, Ray was commissioned by the Hofheinz family to write the biography, based on extensive research and more than 200 hours of interviews by the author with scores of the subject's associates, including such nationally prominent figures as John Connally, Ladybird Johnson, Leon Jaworski, Jack Valenti and Bob Hope. Ray's protessional association with Hofheinz began when *The Houston Press* came out editorially for the Astrodome bond issues.

Jones, who took a personal interest in securing the Ray manuscript for the MSU Press, said the book will be the first in a planned Great American Builders series. Former Texan Jones' enthusiasm for the book is shared by the newly appointed director of the University Press, Dr. Odie B. Faulk, also a native Texan, who came to MSU directly from the post of editor of book publications for the National Cowboy Hall of Fame. Immediately prior to that post, he was chairman of the Department of History of Oklahoma State University. He is author or editor of more than 30 non-fiction books, and a three-time Pulitzer Prize nominee.

Dr. Faulk, who will serve as the Hofheinz book's editor, said: "The research and interviews provide an intimate and detailed portrait of the rise of Roy Hofheinz, son of a poor Beaumont, Texas, truck driver — of a boy who could barely scrape together enough for a circus ticket, but grew up to become the majority stockholder of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus."

Hofheinz's career began as a teen-age dance promoter and, though he became a lawyer at 19 and a state legislator at 22, he never stopped promoting. At 24 he became the youngest county judge in the U.S. Although elected Houston's mayor in later years, he continued to be called "Judge" in honor of his long and distinguished judicial career.

In 1970, a stroke incapacitated Hofheinz, forcing curtailment of his active participation in such far-flung enterprises as radio and TV stations, real estate development, and his Astrodome, Astrohall, and Astroworld hotels in Houston.

Jones said, "*The Grand Huckster* should prove to be a monumental step forward in the national publishing field for Memphis State's University Press, not only because of the world renown of Roy Hofheinz, but also for signing up a biographer who is not only eminently qualified professionally, but who was in a key position to observe the development of the crowning achievements of his subject's career. We feel *The Grand Huckster* and Ed Ray will prove to be an unbeatable publishing combination."